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23. (New) The method according to claim 21, wherein at least one of the first and second limbs includes a detent element projecting into the slit, the detent element being configured to resiliently displace and engage in a counter-detent element of a counter-contact section of the mating connector.

REMARKS

With the cancellation of claims 1 and 3-8 without prejudice and the addition of claims 9-23, claims 9-23 are currently pending in the present application. It is respectfully submitted that the new claims do not add new matter, have adequate support throughout the Specification and are currently in allowable condition.

Since claims 1 and 3-8 have been cancelled without prejudice herein, the claim rejections contained in the Final Office Action dated May 14, 2002 are now moot. Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that new claims 9-23 are allowable over U.S. Patent No. 3,748,633 to Lundergan (hereinafter "Lundergan"), U.S. Patent No. 3,732,531 to Bouley (hereinafter "Bouley"), U.S. Patent No. 3,609,630 to Francis (hereinafter "Francis"), U.S. Patent No. 5,823,798 to Zintler et al. (hereinafter "Zintler"), and U.S. Patent No. 6,196,853 to Harting et al. (hereinafter "Harting") for the following reasons.

I. CLAIMS 9-23 ARE ALLOWABLE OVER LUNDERGAN

Claim 9 relates to a multipole electrical connector for providing a releasable coupling with a mating connector, comprising: a housing; and a contact set supported in the housing, the contact set including a plurality of contact elements, each of the contact elements including a contact section and a connecting section; wherein the contact elements are arranged in a plane and form a single-layer stamped grid.

Lundergan purportedly relates to a an electrical terminal for making electrical connection with a housing. (See Lundergan, Abstract). Referring to Figure 1 of Lundergan, there is seen a housing 1 of an electrical connector, which is operable to receive a plurality of terminals 13. Each of terminals 13 is a separate and distinct element attached to a respective wire 15, and each of the terminals 13 is arranged in a respective parallel plane (See Lundergan, col. 2, lines 7-18; Figure 1).

Since each of the terminals 13 of Lundergan is arranged in its own respective parallel plane, the terminals of Lundergan are neither "arranged in a single plane" nor "form a single-layer stamped grid," as recited in claim 9. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Lundergan does not identically disclose each and every feature of claim 9. Furthermore, since claims 10-14 ultimately depend from claim 9, since independent claim 15 contains features analogous to those of claim 9, and since claims 16-23 ultimately depend from claim 15, it is respectfully submitted that Lundergan does not disclose each and every feature of these claims for at least the same reasons.

II. CLAIMS 9-23 ARE ALLOWABLE OVER BOULEY

Bouley purportedly relates to an electrical connector for receiving and contacting a mating electrical connector, such as a printed circuit board. (See Bouley, Abstract). Referring to Figure 2 of Bouley, there is seen an electrical connector having a single contact element 28 mounted in a body 24 of insulating material. (See Bouley, col. 3, lines 5-8; Figure 2). A male connector element, such as a circuit board 20 or a pin, is shown inserted into opening 26 of body 24. (See Bouley, col. 3, lines 8-10; Figure 2). Contact element 28 has a base 30 and a reward projecting terminal 29 suitable for making connections with an external electrical circuit. (See Bouley, col. 3, lines 22-25).

As described above, Bouley discloses only a single contact element 28 mounted in body 24. Thus, Bouley simply does not disclose a "contact set including a plurality of contact elements," as recited in claim 9. Regardless, however, even if Bouley could be interpreted to disclose multiple contact elements 28, an interpretation Applicants consider unreasonable, there is no indication in Bouley that the multiple contact elements 28 must necessarily be "arranged in a single plane" or "form a single-layer stamped grid," as recited in claim 9.

For at least the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that Bouley does not identically disclose each and every feature of claim 9. Furthermore, since claims 10-14 ultimately depend from claim 9, since independent claim 15 contains features analogous to those of claim 9, and since claims 16-23 ultimately depend from claim 15, it is respectfully submitted that Bouley does not disclose each and every feature of these claims for at least the same reasons.

III. CLAIMS 9-23 ARE ALLOWABLE OVER FRANCIS, ZINTLER, AND HARTING

Any reading of Francis, Zintler and Harting makes clear that none of these references individually discloses each and every feature of claims 9 and 15, from which claims 10-14 and 16-23, respectively, ultimately depend. Furthermore, since neither Lundergan nor Bouley disclose each and every feature of claims 9 and 15, as described above, it is respectfully submitted that the combination of either Lundergan or Bouley with any of Francis, Zintler and/or Harting does not identically disclose each and every feature of claims 9 and 15 and does not disclose each and every feature of claims 10-14 and 16-23 which ultimately depend from claims 9 and 15, respectively.

IV. CONCLUSION

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that pending claims 9-23 are allowable over the cited references, and that the present invention is new, non-obvious, and useful. Prompt reconsideration and allowance of pending claims 9-23 are therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: October 11, 2002

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